



San  
Joaquin  
River  
Management  
Program

P.O. Box 942836, Sacramento, CA 94236-0001

April 26, 2001

Ms. Deborah North  
Land Stewardship Director  
San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust  
1550 E. Shaw Avenue, Suite 114  
Fresno, California 93710

Dear Ms. North:

I am writing in support of the Watershed Capacity Building program, *This River is Our River*, proposed by the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust.

The San Joaquin River Management Program provides a forum to identify problems and solutions to issues related to wildlife, flood protection, water quality, water supply, fisheries, and recreation. The SJRMP Action Team and Advisory Council have reviewed and discussed this proposal, and support efforts to increase public awareness and education regarding the value of the San Joaquin River watershed.

The Advisory Council supports this proposal, and will partner with the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust to identify messages and approaches that watershed groups can implement to continually improve awareness of resource issues and increase stakeholder and landowner participation.

The 1995 San Joaquin River Management Plan recommends education projects related to recreation, wildlife, and fisheries (see p. 38). This recommendation is based on a need to develop education programs for all interested parties and to illustrate the benefits and functions of an improved San Joaquin River system.

The Advisory Council accepts a partnership role in this project and will work closely with the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust to help assure the success of this valuable effort. If you have any questions in this regard, please contact Paula Landis, Action Team Chair, at (559) 230-3310.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Ramirez'.

Tim Ramirez, Advisory Council Chair  
San Joaquin River Management Program

**SUPPORTING  
DOCUMENTATION  
IS ON THE  
FOLLOWING PAGES**

## CONCEPT PROPOSAL FORM I

*For proposals with emphasis on capacity building, education and outreach, or research*

Use this form to describe your concept for a proposal or project to apply to the CALFED Watershed Program for funding support. Use only the space provided, leaving at least a half inch margin with type size no smaller than 10 points. These guidelines are also available in electronic format on the Watershed Program web site:

*[baydeltawatershed.org](http://baydeltawatershed.org)*

### Project and Applicant Information:

Name of project  <i>This River is Our River</i> - Watershed Capacity Building	Budget Estimate: Funds requested: \$275,000 Match (cash & inkind): not confirmed at this time TOTAL: \$275,000
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Project Applicants(s) and/or Principal Investigator(s) and affiliation(s) – use an additional sheet if necessary:

San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Inc.

Project manager or contact person, address, telephone and email (if fiscal agent is different, provide that information, also):

Deborah North, Land Stewardship Director  
San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Inc.  
1550 E. Shaw Avenue, Suite 114  
Fresno, CA 93710  
(559) 248-8480  
[dnorth@riverparkway.org](mailto:dnorth@riverparkway.org)

Project Abstract (include the county, watershed or other geographic reference):

*This River is Our River* will focus on community capacity building in the mid- and upper San Joaquin River watershed, primarily in Fresno and Madera counties. The number of groups forming to address San Joaquin River (SJR) watershed issues is growing, yet among the general public there remains a fundamental lack of public awareness about these issues. This project will develop baseline data on SJR watershed awareness among the neighboring communities and develop tools that will help local organizations provide a connection between people and the watershed by communicating consistent, effective watershed messages. Consistent messages will make it easier for multiple groups within a watershed to convey to the public a steady flow of reliable information about the San Joaquin River in a meaningful and easily understood way. The Trust's continued work with the San Joaquin River Management Program is a key element of this project.

The first 4 months of the program will entail surveying other groups focused on the watershed to identify issues of highest importance to them, followed by public polling to assess both community awareness of watershed issues and effective means of conveying such information. The next 4 months, a multi-media watershed information campaign will aim to raise awareness of significant watershed issues. In the final 4 months a tracking poll will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the media campaign. Additionally a forum of local watershed groups will be convened to share results and craft a series of San Joaquin River watershed-specific messages we can all use to raise public awareness. The Trust intends to use the data to design effective watershed interpretive programs at the Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies, which opens to the public in late 2001.

*If your concept proposal is not selected for further consideration in this round of funding, would you like referral to other possible funding sources? YES X NO \_\_\_\_*

1. Describe your anticipated outcome, or what you plan to achieve, and what practices or programs you intend to use. If a research project, explain the hypothesis and methods on which your concept is based.

*This River is Our River* is intended to improve watershed planning and management along the SJR by raising awareness among our local communities. The proposed project will provide important baseline data on public awareness of SJR watershed issues so that local watershed groups and government agencies can identify and address common issues while ensuring effective communication and implementation among government agencies and stakeholder groups. In doing so, specific river-related watershed messages will be determined to help build the capacity of locally led watershed organizations and enhance participation of local landowners and stakeholders in watershed efforts.

This project builds on The Nature Conservancy of California's "Our Land. Our Water. Our Way of Life." (OLOW) public education and outreach program, which is designed to build awareness for the need and commitment for conservation and to build public support for permanent funding to protect California's unique land and water resources. Whereas OLOW is a statewide effort that distilled public interest poll data into general messages about quality of life and future generations, this project aims for the next level of specificity; to create local watershed-level messages specific to the SJR that can be used to facilitate community capacity building. The number of groups forming to address SJR watershed issues is growing, yet among the general public there remains a fundamental lack of public awareness or understanding about these issues. In Fresno, for example, many are unaware that the river runs through their "backyard." More generally, many are unaware that the river does not flow consistently to the sea. This project will develop baseline data on SJR watershed awareness and develop tools that will help local groups connect people to the watershed by communicating consistent effective watershed messages, thereby raising awareness and ideally encouraging local community members to get involved and take action. This will make it easier for multiple groups within our watershed to convey a steady flow of reliable information on the SJR in a meaningful way that the public will understand.

The project will occur in 4 phases:

1. Survey: Working with the San Joaquin River Management Program, identify SJR watershed groups and survey them about key issues, distill issues and concerns to create a poll, conduct poll to identify level of awareness and interest towards SJR watershed issues.
2. Outreach: Use poll results to conduct a media campaign to increase awareness and provide public information on SJR, CALFED, watershed activities and ways the public can get involved. For this project, The Nature Conservancy can provide contact information for the consultants who worked on OLOW. Upgrade the Trust's website to provide SJR watershed information and links to other watershed groups.
3. Survey: Repeat poll to measure success of campaign and provide a feedback loop for further action.
4. Assess: Working with the San Joaquin River Management Program, identify messages and approaches watershed groups can implement to continually improve awareness of watershed issues and increase stakeholder and landowner participation.

2. Describe the level of community involvement and activity anticipated in this project, including the following elements:

- a. How will your activity promote community and landowner/user involvement in watershed management?

By polling a 2-county area to assess watershed awareness, we can identify and craft watershed messages that resonate within the community. Multi-media outreach efforts, such as television, radio, internet, and written materials, with messages are based on polling data, will inform community members on how they can become involved in watershed efforts. Our web site will be updated to include links to other San Joaquin River watershed efforts.

- b. What level of support is there from the local community and agencies?

Locally, the Trust has over 4,000 active members and approximately 600 volunteers who donated more than 35,000 hours last year. The Trust enjoys strong working relationships with state and local agencies and community groups. We anticipate having letters of support from The Nature Conservancy of California, San Joaquin River Management Program, City of Fresno, County of Fresno, Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District, Oakhurst River Parkway, San Joaquin River Resource Management Coalition and The Bay Institute. The San Joaquin River Management Program has expressed strong support for this type of outreach effort and the goal of the project is consistent with the Bay Institute's Headwaters to Ocean (H2O) efforts.

<p>c. How will the activity foster collaboration among multiple interests or scientific disciplines?</p> <p><i>This River is Our River</i> will provide basic data on community awareness and understanding of watershed issues and efforts along the SJR. The data can be used to create myriad education and outreach programs that build on central watershed themes. The polling results may also indicate ways of improving distribution and use of available watershed information that will be made available to all San Joaquin River watershed groups. As described below, the San Joaquin River Management Program, a regional forum for addressing watershed issues, will be the touchstone for this project and its input, from diverse interests and disciplines, will help drive the project's success.</p>
<p>d. How will your project reach out to and encourage the active participation of local leadership and diverse community interests?</p> <p>Rather than convening a new forum for SJR watershed groups, this project will work within the existing framework of the San Joaquin River Management Program (SJRMP), an inclusive watershed forum that seeks to enhance its ability to involve landowners and stakeholders. By bolstering this aspect of SJRMP, and adding to a n existing 'vehicle', the project can maximize stakeholder outreach and participation, including local leaders. The Fresno-Madera region is experiencing rapid growth and development pressure; it is a timely challenge to engage local leaders in watershed matters. The Trust will meet with local elected officials and Department heads early on and then formally present the work at regularly scheduled public hearings.</p>
<p>e. How will the activity contribute to on-going effective local management of the watershed?</p> <p>Several organizations are now seeking effective means of conducting public outreach independent of each other, running the risk of sending diverse messages and confusing the public they hope to engage. Clear communication between and among groups is essential for effective watershed management and public involvement. When the public understands watershed issues, through clear and consistent messages we hope to develop through polling, our hope is that they will more readily support watershed projects and become more involved, leading to more effective projects, plans and programs within the watershed. <i>This River is Our River</i> is based upon the successful OLOW public education program and will provide SJR watershed groups with a set of clear messages to help the public stay informed and become engaged.</p>
<p>f. What are the potential benefits to the local community, and how will those benefits be measured?</p> <p>The local community is experiencing rapid population growth and development pressure. Many people who are part of the Fresno-Madera community don't know the SJR runs through their backyard, much less that the river is unable to flow to the sea, or why. As a result of this project, we hope the local community will enjoy a newfound sense of place, a heightened quality of life, an understanding as to their location in the watershed, and an appreciation that an ecologically healthy community is compatible with and critical to a vibrant and prospering community. The tracking poll, following the media campaign, will provide a measure of the effectiveness of our messages. It is our hope that watershed groups will experience increases in membership or volunteer interest.</p>
<p>g. How will the project benefits be distributed equitably within the community?</p> <p>The poll will be conducted in an unbiased way, providing a cross-cultural sample of watershed awareness in Fresno and Madera counties. The media campaign will be designed to reach out to both our traditional audience as well as communities of color; this will be achieved by incorporating the Spanish language into printed and audio media products. We will evaluate the feasibility of translating the messages into Asian languages as well.</p>
<p>h. How does your project promote local community involvement with the continued development and implementation of the CALFED Bay Delta Program?</p> <p>This project will develop the baseline data on awareness of the SJR watershed amongst local communities and provide tools to help local groups connect people with the watershed by using consistent, effective messages. When multiple groups convey reliable information to the public in a meaningful way, then people become engaged, involved and supportive. Public support of SJR watershed programs can produce a tidal wave of action; however, the program will take significant nurturing to build support to reach necessary levels. This project is a great place to start. Issues and actions upstream influence issues and actions downstream, ultimately having a potential effect on the way the SJR system will function as a whole when current restoration efforts reach fruition.</p>

3. Describe how the concept demonstrates the value and contributions of watershed management (using a community based and locally led approach) to achieving CALFED goals for the Bay delta system and broader solution area (see Section 7).

It is incumbent on upstream communities to understand how their activities effect downstream communities. This knowledge is the key to providing communities with a “sense of place” in the watershed. Educating upstream communities and enhancing the capacity of upstream watershed groups to implement projects and convey effective messages relating to ecosystem quality, water supply and water quality will benefit the Bay-Delta. The watershed messages and communication tools developed by this project will be useful throughout the watershed, encouraging community understanding and involvement in the watershed, and ultimately providing downstream benefits to the Bay-Delta.

CALFED is dependent, in part, on its ability to provide outreach to and receive support from a broad-based and informed constituency that will support continued expenditures for plan implementation. Our SJR project will present CALFED issues in a more accessible and easily understood way for the public’s benefit. The poll may also suggest ways of effectively disseminating information about CALFED projects to a wider audience. If so, our project will help institutionalize watershed management considerations as a key component in local decision-making forums, thus helping to achieving CALFED goals.

4. Describe how the proposal promotes one or more of the initial implementation priorities of the Watershed Program (see Section 5).

*This River is our River* is a capacity-building project that will develop baseline data on SJR watershed awareness and create tools to help local groups provide a connection for people to by communicating consistent, effective watershed messages. Although the number of groups forming to address San Joaquin River watershed issues is growing, the general public remains relatively unaware about issues affecting them and the SJR. The results of this project will make it easier for groups to convey a steady flow of reliable information about the San Joaquin River in a meaningful way for public consumption. When the public has a fundamental understanding of watershed concepts and issues within their community, then they can become engaged and involved in watershed projects and programs.

The project will specifically enhance the capacity of the San Joaquin River Management Program to function as a regional forum for addressing SJR issues throughout the watershed. Landowners and stakeholders have not been actively involved in SJRMP to date, but we hope that will change with *This River is Our River*. SJRMP’s support of *This River is Our River* indicates the importance of this project to their organization.

*This River is Our River* will also help the San Joaquin River Parkway Trust to develop and implement effective interpretive programs for visitors to the Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies.



5. Describe how your proposal will establish or enhance a partnership between the local community and the CALFED Bay Delta Program.
- a. The CALFED Bay Delta Program funded the initial displays for our Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies. These displays address the SJR watershed, how the river changes over time, as well as ongoing restoration efforts (CALFED Action #99-B25). The center will be open to the public in late 2001 and is intended to be a source of information on river issues for the public. *This River is Our River* will enhance this partnership while the poll results on public understanding of watersheds will be used to develop additional watershed interpretive programs for the Coke Hallowell Center.
  - b. Over the course of a year, *This River is Our River* will be part of the SJRMP agenda, providing a critical link to the local community and helping to establish its function as a forum for all stakeholders and landowners throughout the watershed from the headwaters to the Bay-Delta.
  - c. Funding this project will help establish a CALFED presence in the upper reaches of the SJR watershed. This project provides an opportunity for CALFED to support watershed efforts and programs that ultimately will be essential for the restoration of the SJR.
6. Describe how your project will promote information exchange, including project monitoring and the transfer of technical information, among CALFED and others interested in watershed management.
- a. Regular presentations and updates at SJRMP meetings will foster a collaborative approach and information exchange throughout the project. The meetings will also be an important touchstone to help ensure the project stays focused and on schedule and that all watershed groups have access to the information.
  - b. The San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust will add a page to its web site that provides information about the SJR watershed as well as links to other groups and programs working within the watershed.

7. Describe here any other important aspects of your program that you could not address in the above items, and that you feel are critical to fully describing your concept.

Do you anticipate a desire for possible technical assistance from CALFED to fully develop your proposal? Y\_X\_\_ N\_\_\_\_.  
If yes, what type of assistance do you anticipate?

Budget guidelines and criteria